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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that women are underrepresented in positions of educational authority. This paper presents findings of a study that asked the following question: What is it about the regularities in discourse and practice in relationship to power in a particular community that would allow a woman to be selected for the superintendency, when about 96 percent of the time a man is selected? It is hypothesized that the definition of power is gender-specific (i.e., women define power as collaboration or "power to," whereas men define it as domination, or "power over"). Using Stewart Clegg's (1988) conceptualization of power relationships as "circuits of power," this critical ethnography was conducted in a larger metropolitan area headed by a female superintendent. Data were obtained from a total of about 100 nonstandardized interviews with those in male circuits of power, those in female circuits of power, and those related to the superintendent either directly or indirectly. Other data sources included document analysis and nonparticipant and participant observation. Findings indicate that: (1) power is defined differently by women than men; (2) when women operate according to the female concept of power, their chances to acquire positions of power increase dramatically; (3) women are most likely to be empowered in those communities that have pluralistic or diffused power structures; and (4) women who attain positions of power are most successful when they adopt female approaches to power that stress collaboration, inclusion, and consensus-building models. Contains 68 references. (LMI)

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SUPERINTENDENT SELECTION: LESSONS FROM POLITICAL SCIENCE

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A paper presented at the annual meeting of American Educational Research Association: New Orleans, 1994

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> To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.
>
> --Albert Einstein

Currently the canon in educational administration asserts a desire to attract the best candidates for administrative positions in education (The National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 1989). Although this canon is asserted, one fact stands out which suggests its violation: around ninety-six percent of superintendents of schools are men(Arnez, 1981; Ortiz, 1982; Edson, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989). The prevalent selection practice of hiring men rather than women for administrative positions results in a vast underrepresentation of women in positions of educational authority, relative to the number of women who are educators, who are trained for the position, and who are consumers of educational services. Such underrepresentation of women suggests the existence of "gender bias" in the selection process, but the conclusion that there is in fact such discrimination against women requires an understanding of the causes of this underrepresentation (Schumaker and Burns, 1988)

The low number of women in the superintendency has been explained in various ways: lack of support from network/mentors; lack of role models; low number of women in building-level positions; and family demands (Schmuck, 1975; Shakeshaft, 1979; Tyack and Hansot, 1982; Marshall, 1984; Yeakey, Johnston, and Adkison, 1986; Edson, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989; Whitaker and Lane, 1990; Campbell, 1991). None of these rationales are sufficient to explain the low number of women in the superintendency. Therefore, there is a need to reexamine and rethink this seemingly nonproblematic practice and the discourse surrounding it. As Hochshild (1981, p.1) points out, "...when evidence leads us to expect something that does not happen, an investigation may be warranted."

While this paper will complement other research on women in administration, it will go beyond such research by drawing on theories and research regarding power, a body of literature not typically used by educators. Although foreign to the vast majority of educators, power research has been thoroughly developed and used since the mid-1950s by political scientists and sociologists. With the use of power research, I will examine what I believe is a gender difference in the conceptions/definitions of power. Further, I hypothesize that it is a gender specific conception/definition of power which makes men more attractive candidates than women for the position of superintendent of schools, and that it is this male conception/definition of power which successfully interfaces with expectations held by boards of education when recruiting and selecting superintendents.

My hypothesis is supported by the work of Nancy Hartsock (1987) who begins her discussion of power by associating gender with the definition of power. She states that power is associated firmly with the male and masculinity. With this association established she calls for the reconsideration of the nature of power in order that women have a usable theory of power. She believes that power described as domination ("power over") is not helpful when working to change the subordinate status of women. Hartsock calls instead for a theory of power for women which would begin from the experience and point of view of the subordinate. These theories would give attention not only to the ways women are dominated, but also to their capacities, abilities, and strength. More specifically, such theories would use these capacities as guidelines for the possible changing of power relationships in such a way as to empower women. Empowerment is defined to mean all women as a group would be empowered, not just a few women. This empowering definition/conception of power is referred to as "power to" in the literature (Wartenberg, 1990).

Nancy Hartsock's conception of power is integral to the concept of "power to" because it abandons the limited definition of power as domination ("power over"). Further, she recognizes the need to include the voices of those [women] who are marginalized. This inclusion in and of itself opens the collaborative/empowering model of "power to" so that during any process the voices of women and other marginalized groups may be part of the outcome whether it be a decision, a definition, or new knowledge. Nancy Hartsock's assertion that women's voices be included in the discourse on power is the beginning point of this study.

The Lessons of Political Science

From the earliest times there have been inquiries into the nature of power and the ways it is acquired, retained, wielded, and lost. Philosophers since Plato have pondered questions of who should have power and to what ends it should be employed. Historians since Thucydides have recorded acts of power. The diverse and complex discourse on power has, in the main, been one articulated by white male intellectuals. It is a discourse that lacks consensus. The term power is viewed simultaneously as positive and negative; therefore, confusion arises over the part it plays in human social relations.[1]

Stewart Clegg (1988) and Thomas E. Wartenberg (1990) divide the literature on power along two trajectories which represent its dualistic nature. One trajectory defines power as the ability to do something or the "power to." The other trajectory defines power as control, command or dominion over others, or the "power over." Hannah Pitkin (1972, p. 276-77) agrees with this division when she states that the idea of power in "power to" is significantly different from the idea of power in "power over."[2]

It is the "power over" definition of power which has dominated the discussion by political scientists and sociologists of power in communities (see Hunter, 1953; Domhoff, 1978; Dahl, 1968; Peterson, 1981; Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; and Lukes, 1974). Theories grounded in the belief that power is defined as domination involve a specific type of relationship between human beings, one that is "hierarchical in virtue of one person's ability to affect the other without the other's being able to reciprocate" (Wartenberg, 1990, p. 18).

Theories that fall into this category include: elite theory (Hunter, 1953), pluralism (Dahl, 1968), and economistic theory (Peterson, 1981). However, this traditional, dominant discourse by political scientists is slowly being replaced by current literature which asserts that power be conceptualized as "power to"(see Stone, 1989; Elkin 1987; Clegg, 1989; and Wartenberg, 1990).

My thesis is that contrasting two concepts of power -- "power over" and "power to" -- opens the door to better understandings of educational administration in general and to addressing the issue of gender bias in the selection of school superintendents in particular. Specifically, I hypothesize that educational politics tends, perhaps unconsciously, to be based on the assumptions that power is a functional requisite of successful school systems and that functional power is "power over" -- the ability to exercise social control, to command, to impose one's will on others, and so forth. These beliefs about power are held more strongly by men than by women. Participants in educational politics also tend to assume that men are more effective than women at exerting "power over" and thus tend to select men to exercise the power of the superintendency. However, I propose that these beliefs and practices amount to a very limited understanding and discourse on power, a limitation that has the effect of excluding women from positions of educational authority. The "power to" act in concert or collaboratively, to address and resolve educational problems, to attain what Stone (1989, p. 229) calls "social production" is at least as important to educational politics as is the "power over" others. Women are more likely than men to understand power as social production rather than as social control, and they may be regarded as being more effective at exercising "power to" than "power over." To the extent that power is recognized as social production as well as social control, and to the extent that candidates for school superintendencies are evaluated for their capacities to exercise the "power to" as well as the "power over," gender bias against women in the selection process may be diminished.

Theoretical Background

Educational specialists should not be blamed for having a limited conception of power. Since the birth of Western political theory in Ancient Greece, political philosophers have for the most part conceived of power as the ability to dominate. In this section, I briefly review the major contributors to the discourse on power during the past century and show that only recently has the "power to" been recognized as an important dimension of power.

Two Conceptions of Power

The orthodox conception of power emerged from the work of Max Weber and is still evident in the radical reformulations of power contained in the writings of Steven Lukes. Let us briefly consider the main contributors to the orthodox view that power involves command and control.

Max Weber Max Weber (1924, 1978) defined power as the imposition of one's own will upon the behavior of other persons. This imposition of one's own will becomes domination, which Weber viewed as one of the most important elements of social action. He stated that the great majority of all

economic organizations reveal a structure of dominance. This structure of dominance is both a factor of and a result of economic conditions.

Weber (1978) asserted that bureaucracies are in the category of authoritative domination. Bureaucratic agencies expect unquestioning obedience from their subordinates. This structural authoritative domination is illusive because it is impersonal. It is part of the system or structure of the organization rather than the result of any particular person or group of persons. This type of domination is especially oppressive because resistance to a structure is fruitless. A person either conforms to the system or is forced out. Those in power justify their positions through company policy manuals or other icons of system behavior guidelines. The seduction to conform to the system is especially strong because conformists then belong to the exclusive group of company members with all the privileges that accompany such a membership and, although it goes without saying, conformists generally keep their jobs. The bureaucracy is seen as technically superior because it is capable of reaching the highest degree of efficiency and is the most rational means of exercising control over human beings (Krantz, 1976, p. 8).[4]

Bertrand Russell Bertrand Russell (1938, 1975, p. 19) defined power as a quantifiable production of intended results. He limited his discussion to power over human beings, saying that an individual may be influenced by various methods such as the application of force, the offerings of rewards, the imposition of punishment, and by changing human opinions through education.

In general, he identified three broad categories of the means of power. First, he identified "traditional power" or that power that is derived from habit, customs, etc. Second was "naked power," which is employed by the military. Finally, a category of power which is dependent upon large groups united by a new creed or programme was labeled "revolutionary power" (Russell, 1975, p. 26).

Almost as an addendum, Russell (1975) discussed "power behind the scenes." He refers to less prominent men or women who acquire power by influencing leaders through personal means. "The qualities required for power behind the scenes are very different from those required for all other kinds, and, as a rule, though not always, they are *undesirable* [my emphasis] qualities [manipulative, dishonest]" (Russell, 1975, p. 27).[4]

Herbert A. Simon Drawing on the work of Lasswell and Kaplan (1950) in Power and Society, Herbert Simon (1953) defined power as causing a change in the behavior of someone else. He points out that Lasswell and Kaplan use the terms "influence" to connote attributes like wealth and "exercise of influence" to connote the ability to change the behavior of others. Simon replaces the word "influence" with "value potential or position" and the words "exercise of influence" with "influence." He argues power, the value potential or position an individual possesses, does not imply that she has influence. In other words, to say that someone has wealth is not the same as saying that someone has power. Therefore, Simon wants to separate the power of an office or institutional position from having a reputation for affecting others or having such resources as wealth, education, and popularity.

Simon continues by cautioning that "when we talk about the influence of a particular element in a social system we must make it clear whether we are talking about the influence of the element as an 'independent variable' [with feedback ignored] or whether we mean the net influence of the element, taking into account all the reciprocal influences of other elements upon it" (p. 26). [5] Direct measurements of influence are obtained when the researcher can observe the ratio of change in the behavior of the one influenced to the change in behavior of the influencer. In other words, how much does it take for the influencer to change the behavior of the one influenced?

Robert Dahl Robert Dahl (1968, p. 40) defines power by stating that "power terms in modern social science refer to *subsets of relations among social units such that the behaviors of one or more units* [the responsive units, R] *depend in some circumstances on the behavior of other units* [the controlling units, C] (original emphasis)." His power terms include all relations other than relations with inanimate or non-human objects.

Dahl (1968, p. 41) continues by clarifying the type of descriptive characteristics which are used in the general discourse surrounding the nature of power. He states that those characteristics include the "magnitude" of the power of the controlling units with respect to the responsive units, how this power is "distributed" in the system, and the "scope," and "domain," of control that different individuals have, exercise, or are subject to.

Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz Somewhat as a reaction to Robert Dahl's definition of power, Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz (1962) presented what they call the "second face of power". The dualistic nature of power, they asserted, could be illuminated by not only focusing on the concrete acts of decision-making by specific agencies--which is the foundation of Robert Dahl's analysis of the first face of power--but also by directing the focus toward what they call "non-decision-making." They believe that power is manifested not only in doing things, but also in making certain that some things do not get done. In other words, "to the extent that a person or group--consciously or unconsciously--creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power" (p. 242). They refer to these barriers as "the mobilization of bias," a term borrowed from E. E. Schattschneider (1960).

Bachrach and Baratz propose that researchers should begin --not by asking "Who rules?" as the sociologists do or "Does anyone have any power?" as the pluralists do-- but by examining how "a person or group--consiciously or unconsciously--creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts in the organization under study" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p. 242). Following an analysis of dominant values, beliefs and practices the researcher is directed to investigate which persons or groups would gain from the existing bias and who would be hurt by it. Next, the researcher would examine the extent to which those in the status quo influence community values and political institutions which tend to restrict the range of decision-making to "safe" issues. Only after investigating the second face of power should the researcher investigate the first face of power [emphasized by Dahl] by analyzing participation in decision-making of concrete issues.

Steven Lukes Steven Lukes (1974) introduces his conception of power as one based on a thorough critique of those of Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz. He adds a third dimension of power to Dahl's focus on overt decision-making and Bachrach and Baratz's second dimension of those "non-decision" issues which are kept off of the agenda by powerholders.

The third dimension that Lukes adds can be explained as a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power, those with "power over'" and the "real interests" of those they exclude (p. 24). In other words, a powerholder can exercise power over another person by making that person believe that something that is harmful to them is not harmful. He continues by adding that it is not difficult to manipulate people to get them to desire what you want them to desire. In fact, a third face of power is exercised when people pursue their "preferences" [when their preferences are shared by others] rather than their own "real" or true interests. This manipulation occurs when a powerholder controls the thoughts and desires of others. Lukes's main concern, then, centers on exercises of power in which the subordinate does not know that power has been exercised over her.

The orthodox view of power that resides in these theories continues to dominate most social and political theory, but an alternate conception of power emerged out of the writings of Hannah Arendt and Talcott Parsons. Let us briefly consider their work.

Hannah Arendt. It is asserted that the most famous female political theorist of the twentieth century can be credited for rethinking the concept of political power in ways suggesting that it involves collaboration to achieve socially useful purposes. Hannah Arendt (1970) began her discussion of power by recognizing that dominant conceptions of power take on a white male intellectual voice and emphasize violence. For Arendt, the overwhelming tendency of social and political theorists to conceive of power as domination was illustrated by C. Wright Mills -- a leading sociologist and contributor to "the elite theory" of power. Mills claimed that "all politics is a struggle for power [and] the ultimate kind of power is violence" (Arendt, 1970: 59). For Arendt, this conventional understanding of power suggested a number of important distinctions regarding the capacity of people to control others. For example, she saw "strength" as a characteristic inherent within individuals that was an important resource allowing for domination. "Violence" involved employing such strength in certain ways so as to multiply its effects. And "authority" is the control that an individual attains when others unquestioningly obey him perhaps because of such added ingredients as having trust in him or having respect for him. [6]

Nevertheless, Arendt (1970: 76) differentiated power from strength, violence, and authority; for Arendt, power is "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of the individual; it belongs to the group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is 'in power' we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name." After providing a lengthy defense of this understanding of power, Arendt concluded by defining power as the opposite of violence; power is seen as a collective peace.

Arendt's conception of power is thus radically different than previous "power over" definitions. It implies the collaborative aspect of power. It suggests that power arises when people get together, act in concert, and do so through means that eschew violence, force, and other means of domination.

Talcott Parsons. While Arendt focused on the collaborative aspects of power, Parsons -- a leading sociologist -- emphasized that functional aspects of power. According to Parsons, power is the general capacity of a social system or culture to get things accomplished in the interest of collective desires (Habermas, 1977: 86). In other words, Parsons viewed power as a resource of societies or communities and emphasized its benefits to the whole society. Rather than viewing power as dysfunctional because it involved domination over people, Parson believed that power should be seen as functional because it allowed social production -- the harnessing of collective energies to produce social goods. From Parson's perspective, power involved cooperation among people rather than conflict between groups or classes.

Parsons (1963) turned social action theory of power into a system theory of power. Rather than seeing power as a concept that allowed the social theorist to understand how specific actors mobilize their resources to attain their personal goals, Parsons saw power as a concept that allowed the social theorist to understand how a social system (or community) could mobilize its resource to attain its collective goals. For Parsons, power was produced when a group of people developed common convictions that allowed them to reach agreements on how to act and how to solve social problems. And common convictions and social agreements were produced by noncoercive language that established intersubjective understandings of how to act collectively. In short, Parsons sought a conception of power that ridded it from the previous focus on the ability of some individuals to control others for their own personal goals.

In summary, Arendt and Parsons provided an alternative to the conventional conception of power as domination and control that was axiomatic to the disciplines of political science and sociology since their inception. Rather than individual power, they stressed collective power. Rather than a device to attain personal accomplishments, they stressed the means to attain common goals. Rather than social control, they stressed social production. Rather than individual capacities, they stressed intersubjective relationships. In short, rather than the "power over" others, they stressed the "power to" solve social problems.

<u>Different Theories of Community power</u>

Between 1950 and the early 1980s, various theories emerged in the disciplines of political science and sociology purporting to describe and explain the distribution of power within social systems (especially local communities). While these theories -- elitism, pluralism, and the economistic paradigm -- disagreed greatly over the question of how power is distributed, they shared the assumption that power involved the ability to command and control. Only with the more recent work of Stephen Elkins (1987) and Clarence Stone (1989) has a new theory of community power -- regime theory -- emerged that builds on the insights of Arendt and Parsons and recognizes

that power involves collaboration to produce social goods. In this section, these theoretical developments are briefly reviewed.

Elite Theory. In 1953, Floyd Hunter initiated an enormous debate within political science and sociology over the distribution of power or "who really rules?" In Community Power Structure (1953), Hunter presented a new analytical tool -- the reputational method -- which showed that Regional City (his pseudonym for Altanta) was in fact run by a small handful of economic elites, more or less as Marx had claimed. Hunter devised a precise methodology that could be replicated by other researchers. His method, which was later called the "reputational method" is based on informant perceptions of the most influential people in Regional City. Basically, this method consists of the researcher asking people who they think has power, why they have it, and how they use it. The connections between people are then mapped to form the community's power structure. Elite theorists believe that despite the framework of formal democracy, political power is in the hands of a small elite group of upper class businessmen who rule covertly through those they would have in public office.

Pluralism Robert Dahl and his fellow political scientists at Yale criticized elite theory and Hunter's reputational method, developing their own alternative theory, which was referred to as "pluralism," and their own method, which was referred to as the "decisional technique (Trounstine and Christensen, 1982; Dahl, 1958; Dahl, 1961; Kimbrough and Nunnary; 1988)." They asserted that nothing can be assumed about the distribution of power in a community, and that it should be studied by analyzing particular decisions on specific issues to see who participates and who succeeds. With this type of evidence, it was thought that conclusions can be reached about who holds power (Polsby, 1980).

For pluralists democratic ideals do not require that representatives always respond to all constituencies, popular majorities, or marginalized groups. Instead, democracy simply requires that voters be allowed to reveal their own evaluation of decisions made by legislative and executive representatives at the next election (Schumaker, 1991). This belief implies that if citizens really desire to bring pressure on government, they can, and if they don't that the compliance is genuine (Fainstein and Fainstein, 1974; Stone, 1989). Although pluralism recognizes that more than one group impacts governance, and that interest groups have and do change the course of events, as a paradigm, it still belongs to the "power over" category. This "power over" position results when pluralists make observations without critique and carelessly assume that the interest groups in power because of their dominance have an exclusive right to decision-making. It is this attitude which renders marginalized groups such as women and minorities silent and without representation. Thus, this position reifies the status quo of rule by the dominant.

The Economistic Paradigm The economistic paradigm appeared in the early 1980s. It was most completely developed by Paul Peterson, and it appears to transcend the elitist-pluralist debate by asserting that "what was important in the study of community power was not the evaluation of policy outcomes in terms of democratic criteria but rather the explanation of these outcomes in terms of economic incentives"(Schumaker, 1991, p.13). Peterson

(1981) suggests that, although elite theory and pluralism are partially correct, it is allocational polices which are best explained by pluralism and developmental policies which are best explained by elite theory.

Allocational policies are defined as those policies which involve the delivery of basic housekeeping public services which affect only a small segment of the community. This type of policy has a neutral impact on the economic health of the community-as-a-whole and therefore is of no interest to the power elites. Educational policy usually falls in the category of allocational policies and, therefore, should reflect pluralistic power distributions. On the other hand, developmental policies involve plans made to attract industry to the community as well as the enhancement of the physical infrastructure of the city in order to insure growth (Elkin, 1987; Schumaker, 1991). Because developmental policies directly impact the economic growth of the city including individual businesses, the power elites become involved and dominant.
next section.

Regime Theory Most recently a few political scientists have included a discussion of coactive power in their power studies. For example, Clarence Stone and Steven Elkin view power as an interaction among public bodies and private interests. This view is more collaborative than those of previous power studies. In addition, they give value to social justice by suggesting that governing bodies be evaluated on whether they are fair in their distribution of power and policy benefits. Their work falls in a category referred to as the "regime paradigm."

The regime paradigm, principally constructed by Clarence Stone and Stephen Elkin, challenged the economistic paradigm by analyzing the character of governing coalitions in cities (Schumaker, 1991). The character of these so-called "urban regimes", which are defined as "the informal arrangements by which public bodies and private interests function together in order to be able to make and carry out governing decisions" (Stone, 1989, p. 6), can be at times responsive to their constituencies or more pluralistic, and at other times unresponsive to community interests or more elitist (Stone, 1989; Elkin, 1987).

Regime theorists evaluate the effectiveness of urban regimes using several criteria. First, they argue that policies of governing bodies should serve the public interest rather than the special interests of the governing elite. They recognize that this type of value judgment, in terms of who benefits, is a subjective one. Second, they assert that regimes be evaluated based on their effectiveness in coping with problems that arise within the community. This criterion, too, is difficult to measure, because with any solution, other problems can be created.

Third, they suggest that regimes be evaluated based on whether they are fair in their distribution of power and policy benefits. They define fair as the absence of "systematic bias" against "permanently subordinate group[s]" (Stone, 1980, p. 980). And finally, they state that a regime should be evaluated based on the extent to which they contribute to an active, informed, and public-spirited citizenry (Elkin, 1987; Stone, 1989; Schumaker, 1991).

Therefore, regime theorists take the position that citizens should be educated to initiate policies which insure their own broader political and economic goals. This type of citizenry, they believe, will reduce systemic bias and improve social intelligence (Schumaker, 1991). In addition, they assert that the "power struggle concerns, not control and resistance, but gaining and fusing a capacity to act--*power to*, not *power over*" (Stone, 1989, p. 229). They view the educated citizenry as having strong potential for action once they have fused or coordinated their efforts.

Circuits of Power One effort to synthesize the various conceptions of power and alternative theories of power that have emerged in political science and sociology is that of Stewart Clegg (1988). Clegg refers to power relationships as *circuits of power*. This conception of *circuits of power* is fully developed in his book Frameworks of Power (1989). It is a concept designed to include the voices of the marginalized and, thus, is useful for this study.

Clegg describes *circuits of power* as rings or circles of social integration which are complete with normative rules which fix relations of meaning and membership. These rings have several loops or circuits which include exits and entrances referred to with terms such as empower/disempower, facilitate/restrict, and control/contest, among others (p. 214). These rings or circuits of power are not singular, but overlap each other in varying amounts and degrees. Because of this overlapping, each circuit impacts many others. Any person or organization of power may belong to several circuits, in fact, probably cannot avoid being part of many. For example, a person may be allowed entrance into a middle management position, but not allowed into upper management because the normative rules in that circuit are more restrictive. Thus the circuit of power for that person looks different that the circuit allowed someone who has gained entrance into upper management.

Clegg is quick to point out that power which makes only one circuit, if that ever happens, has no need to struggle against relations of meaning and membership and is extremely efficient. He categorizes the classical definition of power, A getting a B to do something that B would not otherwise have done [This definition is most overtly found in the writing of Robert Dahl (1958).], as a view of power which makes only one circuit. His implied definition of power, then, is much more complex and inclusive than that of Dahl. This inclusive nature lends itself to the possibility of a new or previously excluded definition of power--that is a "female" definition of power which would be found in the female circuit of power--and more, it is a perspective which furthers shapes the critical methodology.

Clegg's fluid concept of power as a process which passes through different circuits is particularly open to the differences in discursive practices which are found in various cultures. Further, because this study is designed to discern not only the differences between a male definition of power and a female definition of power but also between a male circuit of power and a female circuit of power, the openness of this framework is important.

The development of a female circuit of power follows the thinking of Nancy Hartsock (1987) when she calls for a theory of power for women--a theory which begins from the experience and point of view of the dominated.

"Such theories would give attention not only to the ways women are dominated, but also to their capacities, abilities, and strengths....[These] theories would use these capacities as guides for a potential transformation of power relationships--that is, for the empowerment of women" (p. 158).

It is apparent that women are found in positions of power which are typically only filled by men. Have they entered the male circuit of power, overcoming resistance, or have they remained in the female circuit of power with access to the male circuit of power because they have permission from the men? These questions are central to this study. The greater community which includes these male and female circuits of power is also to be studied as the discursive practices of the greater community have a decided impact on any subculture within it.

Methods of Study

The methodology employed in this study, critical ethnography, is rooted in interpretative inquiry and its approaches have developed in political science, sociology, anthropology, and ethnography. [7] Such methodology is used because traditional scientific methods measure power as "power over" with assumptions made about behaviors, normative rules, and policies that are preferred. These traditional scientific studies result in measures of the degree of "power over" in relationships rather than the observations of "power to" in practices and relationships. Further, it is through the use of interpretative inquiry and Clegg's (1988) conception of power as *circuits* that the goal of this research is attainable. The goal of this research, then, is not to measure power but to <u>understand</u> the various conceptions of power held by different people, and to <u>understand</u> how those conceptions interface with the superintendency selection process.

Studies made through inquiry are problematic because researcher values and position in culture, their own discursive practices, permeate the inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Fraser, 1989; Lather, 1991). The inquiry, then, becomes an interpretive act that occurs with the writing of texts, and as with any form of writing, certain constraints partially determine what is written (Van Maanen, 1988). A few general difficulties, asserted by Van Maanen in <u>Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography</u> (1988), follow.

First, inquiries [ethnographies] are experientially driven, in that researchers draw directly from their own experience in the field. This establishes instrumental or critical limits to what a given researcher can or cannot learn in a given setting. For example, Warren (1988, p. 10), a prominent feminist ethnographer, has written: "Just as all knowledge--even language itself--is political, reflecting power relations (Foucault, 1978), all knowledge is gendered." Warren shows how ethnography is highly influenced by the researcher's gender, the informant's gender, and the relation between the two. Much has been written on how personal characteristics open doors for some while closing them for others.

If uninfluenced objectivity is unattainable, an alternate methodology is compelling. When using the tools of ethnography a researcher may choose to take a position of critique. This critique may be designed to advocate a position of social justice in order to avoid being <u>blindly</u> prejudiced, purposely

limiting the inquiry.[8] This particular limitation-- a position against racism, classism, and sexism--is viewed by many as the legitimacy of critical ethnography.

Second, inquiries are politically and personally connected. In the world of budgets and academic sponsors, particular agendas attach themselves to the fieldworker. Many times, in order to facilitate the completion of her research, the fieldworker will operate under the thumb of or be directed by these particular agendas, even when these agendas are outside the interest of the field-worker. These types of political constraints may alter the nature and original intent of the research. In addition, the fieldworker brings her own personal agendas to the field. As is true in any interaction, the researcher influences participants in a way that further limits or changes the study--in fact, in a way that changes the participants (Van Maanen, 1988).

Finally, inquiries are shaped and determined by the disciplines in which they are grounded. Institutional materials absorbed by the fieldworker drive her interests and assumptions and eventually impact the outcome. General intellectual trends and debates also impact the final product (Van Maanen, 1988).

If, then, a reader feels the necessity to categorize this particular study, it would fall most easily into the category of "critical ethnography" a method which at least makes the effort to empower those involved to change as well as understand their world. Lather (1991) uses empowerment to mean analyzing ideas about the causes of powerlessness, recognizing systemic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change the conditions of our lives. In fact, this collaborative critical inquiry is needed to empower the researched as well as the researcher. It is the collaborative approach to the inquiry which puts the researched and the researcher in the position to empower themselves.

Research Objectives

The literature on women in the selection of superintendents is clear (Shakeshaft, 1989). If a woman wishes to be selected as a superintendent of schools, her chances are poor. Some studies offer rationales such as lack of support from networks/mentors, lack of role models, and family demands for the fact that so few women become superintendents of schools (Schmuck, 1975; Tyack, 1982; Edson, 1988). It is the judgment of this researcher that none of these rationales are sufficient to explain this dilemma. It is a dilemma because while school boards are seeking capable candidates, they are for some reason overlooking strong female contenders. Therefore, the objectives of this research project include:

1. A description of the move of one woman from the female "circuit of power" into the male "circuit of power" in order to become superintendent of schools.
2. The development of a critical description of a male "circuit of power" and a female "circuit of power" in a community/culture where a woman is the superintendent of schools using a framework borrowed from political science.

3. The establishment of a definition of the concept of power, and a description of the discursive practices related to the concept of power in a male "circuit of power" and a female "circuit of power".
4. The establishment of a definition of the concept of power held by the woman superintendent to determine if her definition has changed as a result of her moving into the male circuit of power.

Data Collection

Three primary methods of data collection were utilized for this critical ethnography: nonstandardized interviews; nonparticipant and participant observation, and document/record review and analysis. Document and record reviews and interviews have complementary strengths and weaknesses and served to strengthen each other. In addition, nonparticipant and participant observation were employed when possible to serve as triangulation.

Field Site The most important criterion for the selection of a site for the study was to find a school district where a woman had been a superintendent of schools for a few years. The "number" of years in the position of superintendent was of concern. It was noted that if she was in the position too long, her recollection of events and feelings would be altered because of the passing of time. On the other hand, however, in order that her discursive practices be solidly in place in what would be considered a white, male power position, it was felt that some time in the position was important. Therefore, a site in which a woman had been superintendent for more than two years and less than seven years was selected.

In addition, it was helpful to have a site where the woman worked her way up through the hierarchy of the organization before gaining the position of superintendent. This was seen as needed in order to follow the hypothesized change in her definition of power as she moved from the female "circuit of power" to the male "circuit of power".

In proximity to a larger metropolitan area referred to as "Welton", the site selected will be known as "New View" throughout the telling of the story. The woman superintendent will be referred to as "Dr. Mary Osburn." All names are fictional in an effort to conceal the identity of people and places in the study.

Establishing Samples The samples used in the study were established using Floyd Hunter's (1953) [community power structure researcher] *reputational method.* People in the educational community and in the community-at-large were asked to identify men and women whom they felt are powerful. Thus, male and female circuits of power were identified in the educational community and in the community-at-large. In addition, extensive interviews were conducted with the female superintendent and people who could triangulate her story.

Interviews Three groups were interviewed: 1) those in the male "circuits of power," 2) those in the female "circuits of power," and 3) those related to the superintendent either directly or indirectly [past employers; board of education members, past and present; co-workers, past and present;

employees; and friends]. In addition, multiple interviews were held with the superintendent.

Since the study was concerned with discovery and understanding rather than verification, the interview approach was the nonstandardized interview (Dexter, 1970). The nonstandardized interview is defined by a free-flowing and spontaneous movement guided by cues from the interviewee which enable the understanding of multiple realities and inner perspectives of the participants (Patton, 1980; Guba and Lincoln, 1981). In addition, guidelines established by Patti Lather (1991) for critical inquiry were followed [at least, in part]. Thus, the interviews were: 1) interactive with self-disclosure on the part of the researcher, 2) were sequential as suggested by respondents in order to facilitate collaboration, 3) open to negotiation of meaning-- respondents were asked to interpret the meaning of common responses in addition to the interpretation of their own monologue, 4) done at least twice with each respondent [and as many as six times] in order that reciprocity occur, 5) done with a researcher [I] who has been impacted by the knowledge of these guidelines and consequently changed so that the shape of the interviews has also changed, and 6) triangulated with other interviews, records, documents, participant observation and non-participant observation.

The order and number of interviews was determined by both logic and logistics. The final number [around 100] of interviews was not predetermined. Guidelines were established to determine the number of times a given interviewee was interviewed. The issues of reciprocity, collaborative theory building versus theoretical imposition, and validity were a focus in these determinations (Lather, 1991). Due to the length considerations of this particular paper, only a brief portion of the full story will be shared here. A full account of the study can be found in Brunner (1993), By Power Defined: Women in the Superintendency.

Hypotheses

This study began with the question: What is it about the regularities in discourse and practice in relationship to power in a particular community that would allow a woman to be selected for the position of superintendent of schools when about ninety-six percent of the time a man is selected? It is hypothesized that the definition of power is gender specific. That is, that women define power as "power to," as collaborative and inclusive in nature, while men define power as "power over," as a form of domination which insures that one person can cause another to do what the dominant person desires.

Further, it is hypothesized; that *circuits of power* exist in the world of men and in the world of women; that the definition of power in the male circuit of power is "power-over", while the definition of power in the female circuit of power is "power-to" (Clegg, 1989); and, that the discursive practices of men and women in their separate circuits of power are different just as the languages from one culture to another are different. The experiences of women in their circuit of power train them to "sound" a certain way, to view power a particular way, and to interact in relationships in a specific way. As anyone placed in a foreign culture does not "fit," a woman placed in an unfamiliar circuit of power (male) will not blend unless she makes radical adaptations in the way she sounds, perceives, and interacts.

Therefore, it is finally hypothesized that if a woman is co-opted into the male circuit of power giving her access to positions viewed as powerful by a white male-dominated culture, she must abandon her own circuit of power, and adopt new discursive practices surrounding the concept of power. The test of these hypotheses was not a traditional experimental design but a critical ethnography of a single site--a particular educational community /culture and the fuller community/ culture in which it is embedded, where a woman has become superintendent of schools.

What is Power?--A Part of the Story

The Selection of a Superintendent

Dr. Mary Osburn moved from the position of high school principal into the position of superintendent with no experience in central office work. Although this is not unheard of, it is rather unlikely, especially in a district the size of New View. At first glance, it appears that she was selected because of her success at the high school. In fact, there are those in the community who believe this is the reason. "I think probably [she got the job] because of her reputation at the high school, and I think the reputation did it...she did more at the high school than had been done in many years." Among Dr. Osburn's accomplishments included her building a team feeling among staff members, putting the needs of children first, giving attention to curriculum development, empowering others, and increasing the communication level because of her own exceptional ability to communicate.

There are those, as the one quoted above, who believe Mary was hired simply on her record as a high school principal or simply because of her skills and ability. The screening committee which chose the five finalists consisted of one female legislator, two male college professors, and one female board of education member. One member of the screening committee remarks that Mary's credentials looked different than the credentials of the men who apply in that she had no central office experience. This apparent lack is made up by the breadth of her experiences, however. Most of the men have central office experience of some kind, and at least one board member confides that it is a risk to hire Mary without this experience. Thus, Mary's ability and career record became a focus and the supposed rationale for her eventual selection. The belief that her ability and career record are the reasons Mary was hired, however, is not as widely held as others.

Other ideas do not discount Mary's ability or career record. Rather, they take her ability and record as givens. In other words, it is felt that anyone selected as superintendent would necessarily have ability and a strong performance record. Selection of a superintendent, then, becomes an event which happens above or perhaps beside the issue of the level of ability and past performance record of the candidate. Since the position of superintendent is political, the selection of a superintendent is a relatively complex process. The process is further complicated when a woman is the final selection. The role that the exiting superintendent plays in the selection process of a replacement depends on the reasons surrounding the exit. If the incumbent is leaving to the regret of the community, the district, and the school board, then the opinion of that superintendent is important in the

selection process. If the incumbent is being forced out of the position, something which happens regularly as the titles of Arnez's (1981) and Blumberg's (1985) books suggest, then the incumbent's opinion is of no significance.

At the time of Mary Osburn's selection, the retiring superintendent, Mr. Hamilton, was a significant and well-liked member of the community of New View. In fact, he was viewed perhaps more readily as a businessman than as an educator. This placed him in a favored position in the community and in the educational setting. It is not often that a superintendent is seen as part of the community power structure (Kimbrough, 1968), and although Mr. Hamilton was not considered a member of the most elite group of power holders-- "he is not tied directly to the most powerful group [the male circuit of power]"-- he definitely was seen as one of the power players in the community, and certainly as someone who was on the inside of the power network. At the time of his tenure he was viewed as: "a community person" "...business oriented" "...he knows more about finance than anyone in the state" "...knowledge of the district was his greatest strength" "...the power structure viewed him as a powerful superintendent" "...powerful because he had lots of community contacts and belonged to lots of civic organizations" "...personable--was liked by the staff" "...extremely competent business man, he was business manager of the district for several years before he became superintendent...was on the board of directors of the local bank for several years...has considerable independent wealth" "...he was smooth, political."

Mr. Hamilton's tenure as superintendent was five years. He did, however, serve as business manager for the district--a central office position--for several years before that. During his tenure as superintendent, the district employed an assistant superintendent of curriculum and personnel. When Mr. Hamilton retired, the assistant superintendent, Mr. Robinson, applied for his position. Mr. Robinson, along with Dr. Osburn, was one of the five finalists for the position of superintendent. The fact that Mr. Robinson did not get the job was a surprise to some people, "I was surprised when he was not selected. When two people are up for a superintendency and one is the assistant superintendent and the other the high school principal, it seems more natural that the assistant superintendent would get the job." Others were not surprised: "I think that Mr. Robinson is a little abrasive--more prone to personality conflicts with people whom he needed to have on his team. There was not a harmonious feeling between him and the union. The district has gone through a lot with the teachers." "It doesn't surprise me at all [that he was passed over]--personality- wise he is very tight and tense. When I talk to Mr. Robinson, I know I need to have an agenda in my head and stick to it. That need is a response to his style. He has those click, click, click answers--concrete sequential. He never probes my mind as to what else I might be thinking, or ask why I said or did what I did."

The picture painted above of Mr. Robinson is not complete. He definitely has advocates in the district who offer explanations for the negative views surrounding him. For example, it is pointed out that since his job was personnel, he became a target for any difficulties between the board and the teachers. And, there were significant difficulties during his tenure. At one point, the board moved to unilateral contracts--probably the most devastating decision possible in staff/board relations for teacher moral. It is noted that the final move to unilateral contracts occurred after Dr. Osburn was hired, but

the year before marked the beginning of the fight. Mr. Robinson's job with personnel remained constant during the entire episode.

Mr. Robinson's position under Dr. Osburn changed. "Mr. Robinson was a powerful person until Dr. Osburn moved in. He was interested in the job right past him. The year after Dr. Osburn was hired he lost the curriculum piece of his position," reflects one of the district administrators. There are other comments which lead me to believe that Dr. Osburn was careful to avoid becoming the negative target which Mr. Robinson became, as is obvious in this comment made by a board member. "Mary did a tremendous job of making certain that there was a demarcation between herself and the past assistant superintendent, Mr. Robinson...I think that Mary saw some of his strengths so she had him handle issues surrounding personnel, and this is how his job was defined." Dr. Osburn's memory of Mr. Robinson's reaction to her selection follows: "His reaction was very positive. The next day he came to my office and said that he was ready to work for me. I do think that I wasn't taken seriously by Mr. Robinson when I first applied because I was <u>just</u> a high school principal, and there were other superintendents who had applied."

The bottom line of this discussion is that Mr. Robinson was not hired and Dr. Osburn was. Probably the greatest inside influence on the board at the time of selection was the exiting superintendent, Mr. Hamilton. I support this assertion with comments that fall into three categories; 1) ones which reflect Mr. Hamilton's overt support of Dr. Osburn, 2) ones which reflect the lack of interest from the community in the selection process at the time, and 3) ones which define the type of people on the board of education at the time.

First, Mr. Hamilton's advocacy for Dr. Osburn's selection both as a high school principal and as his successor was overt. He admits openly that he supported her verbally for both positions, "I recruited Mary for high school principal. She was one of the only women. When I left the superintendency in New View I became her advocate, even though she didn't have central office experience. I influenced the board." Mary remembers Mr. Hamilton's impact, "I felt like Mr. Hamilton was a supporter. He did encourage me to apply...I probably wouldn't have applied otherwise. I have read that many women do not apply until they are encouraged to by someone else while men have a tendency to apply." The literature supports this statement (Edson, 1988).

Second, Mr. Hamilton's influence on the board of education was greater than usual because the community at large was less interested in the selection of the superintendent than they generally are. Statements from the male circuit of power which support this notion include: "There was not a high degree of interest from the power groups about the superintendency. In the past, the power group did a lot more research about the candidates. I don't think that they had a particular candidate that they wanted." "This time the power groups were not as interested. They are getting older. Their businesses are good enough that they don't need to work so hard at directing things. It doesn't have to happen [original emphasis]."

Third, Mr. Hamilton had a greater impact on the board members than usual because of the relationship the board had to the community power groups. Mr. Hamilton was considered part of the power network in New View.

The board of education, at the time Dr. Osburn was selected, was also viewed as connected to the power network. This relationship is explained by a board member in the following way, "I would say that the board at that time was tied to the old boys network because they were beholden to them." With the board's tie to the old boys network and Mr. Hamilton's respected position in that network, it is probable that the board paid close attention to any recommendation that he made.

In addition, Mr. Hamilton, while in New View, played an active part in soliciting board members. He abandoned this practice later because of a negative experience. He shares the following, "I used to encourage people to be on the board of education. I think that was a mistake now. I lost a friendship once." Thus, the board at the time of Dr. Osburn's selection was strongly led by Mr. Hamilton. Whether because of friendship or because of his position in the power structure, his suggestions were rarely questioned. Another comment about the character of the board at the time of Dr. Osburn's selection relates to their need for power. "I think the board wanted to hire someone who they could control somewhat--to get done what they wanted. I don't think that Mr. Hamilton followed them. He listened to people, but I don't think he asked for input. He felt he knew more than other people." The literature reflects that theoretically, the superintendent acts at the bidding of the board, and if the board of education, at the time of Dr. Osburn's selection, wanted to hire someone whom they could control, a woman would have a greater chance than usual because women are socialized to remain subordinate (Hickcox and Stapleton, 1970).

But what about outside influences on the selection of Dr. Mary Osburn as the New View superintendent? The most noticeable influence from the community is the lack of influence or interest. The reasons for this lack of interest appear to relate to New View's growth.

New View Hires a Female Superintendent

For the most part, as is established above, the power groups were not as involved as usual in the selection of a new superintendent when Mr. Hamilton retired. Whether it is because of the reasons listed above, or because the power groups trust Mr. Hamilton, as part of the power network, to represent them sufficiently, is not known. The fact remains that the circuits of power in New View put almost no pressure on the board to select anyone in particular.

Other issues occurring in the school district at and around that time got much more attention from the community. One issue was the move by the board of education to unilateral contracts, and the other was the passing of a bond issue to build new facilities, including a new high school. Both issues began before Dr. Osburn was hired and both were completed after she was hired. In fact, both issues may have been in her favor. First, when considering unilateral contracts, the fact that Dr. Osburn is a very popular administrator with the teaching staff made it a wise move on the part of the board of education to hire her as they tried to influence staff. Second, when considering the bond issue which had failed twice before Dr. Osburn was hired, it becomes obvious that since the bond issue involves the building of a new high school, it made sense to hire the high school principal to sell the need for a new facility to the public. Dr. Osburn filled the bill in both cases.

The fact that the community was paying attention to unilateral contracts is revealed by comments from a man in the circuit of power. "The business community paid attention [to unilateral contracts] because they created bad publicity for the community. The board and the teachers wouldn't talk to each other. Teachers were doing dumb things. The kids were the ones who got hurt. So the chamber decided that if we got the teachers and the board together to tell them what we thought, that it might help. So we did. We just told them that we didn't feel like either side was negotiating. We told them that they were tearing up the community. They settled it in a few weeks after that. I don't know whether we had an impact or not." He continues by adding that the schools in New View are a drawing card to people needing a place to live, and that the fight between the board and the staff put the schools in a negative light. In other words, the fight between the school board and the teachers directly impacted the economic health of the community.

Something unusual happened in the school board election following the move to unilateral contracts. As is stated earlier, school board members on the board at the time were connected in some way to the old power network. Teachers, who were very unhappy about the board's decision, organized against board members who were up for reelection to make certain that their own candidates were elected. A person in the female circuit of power shares the surprise from the power community over the move by the united front of teachers to gain control of the board of education. She continues: "They [new school board members] are not powerful people. I told you how they got elected. Dr. Osburn was already in her position as superintendent when they were elected, so they didn't hire her." It is implied that since the new board members are not connected to the old power network, they are not powerful. Indeed, not one person on the current school board is listed as powerful by anyone interviewed.

Another issue of economic interest to the community is the passing of a bond issue. First, it is obvious that a bond issue is an expenditure to the local taxpayers--something that hits each individual home owner, and there are a lot of those in New View. Second, as is stated above, the schools in New View are a drawing card for growth--and as is evident by the number of mobile classrooms around the middle school and the high school, the New View schools are very overcrowded. This overcrowding makes the schools less attractive to newcomers, and therefore, a threat to growth. Paradox resides in the fact that growth creates the overcrowding in the first place.

New View Board of Education, under the leadership of Mr. Hamilton, tried and failed twice to pass the bond issue. The first attempt, for nine million dollars, was a plan to build a new high school. It failed. The second attempt, for thirteen million, was still a plan for the building of a high school. One of the founding fathers of New View being opposed to the planned building site took a public position against the bond issue. In fact, the day before the vote, he purchased a full page ad in the local newspaper to make his statement against the campaign. The bond failed again. He recalls his position, "I was opposed to the bond issue at first because of the location. Finally, I just gave in because they needed space so much. The last time [the third time] I didn't oppose it."

After the bond issue failed for the second time, the leadership of the district changed, and Dr. Osburn became the new superintendent. As a new

first-year superintendent, she decided to follow advice she received from a college professor and "pick a tough issue that you know you can win and win it--so people see you as a winner...But you need to study and decide which things you can win." So, Dr. Osburn had a game plan. I asked if the bond issue was her tough issue. She replied, "Building confidence in the schools was my first issue. I knew that I had to get the community convinced that the schools were good in order to get the bond issue passed. The bond issue was a vote of confidence in the schools."

In fact, community members and educators believe that the bond issue passed the third time around in part because of Dr. Osburn's leadership. When asking about the success of the third attempt, I heard the following response from a man in the circuit of power, "I think Dr. Osburn had the greatest influence on that. I think that she is excellent in making sure that people have information. She does a good job of putting things together to make them sound like 'this is for you--it is not for the school board.' I think that a lot of people took it that way the first two times...Dr. Osburn made them feel like this is what your child will get if we pass this." An educator made the following comment, "The current superintendent finally did it right. She convinced everyone that it was for the kids."

It is obvious that a bond issue becomes a community issue because of the necessity of the vote to pass it. It is also apparent that anything that impacts the economic health of the community will be noticed by community members. And although the superintendent has an important role in both unilateral contracts and the passing of a bond issue, neither decision, in the final analysis, rests in the hands of the superintendent. In fact, the superintendent, in both cases, is the bridge between the community/board of education and the educational system. And, when push comes to shove, it is the community which makes the final decision in both cases.

It is this overt involvement from the community in both the unilateral contracts and the bond issue which provides a baseline of information as to New View's willingness to be involved in school district matters. New View is extremely willing to be involved. Therefore, when the same community members report that they were not involved in the selection of Dr. Osburn while they were involved in the selection of the superintendent in the past, I believe that the involvement was minimal.

Although the lack of involvement of the New View power circuit in the selection process cannot be labeled as supporting the candidacy of a woman for superintendent of schools, it can be said that it did not hurt Dr. Osburn's candidacy. In addition, it is apparent that other conditions in the community were favorable for the selection of a woman as superintendent. One overt condition is the fact that power in New View is shifting between power factions. The eventual outcome is unknown, but currently, the election of a grass-roots mayor, the resulting local government appointments, and the election of school board members who represent teachers, government of, by, and for the people has an opportunity to flourish. These events are overt signs of the shifting of the power of the "old boys' network" into the hands of the general population. New View is experiencing democratization, which historically means the redistribution of political resources and a reduction in political inequalities (Dahl, 1982). This redistribution of political resources and reduction of political inequalities results in a redefinition of power. Thus,

New View is experiencing a redefinition or a broader more inclusive definition of power.

What is Power?

It is the more inclusive definition of power which I believe makes New View receptive to the idea that placement of women in positions of power is appropriate. In order to determine whether an inclusive definition of power is necessary to allow women into the circuit of power typically constructed solely of men, I spent hours in interviews listening to definitions and descriptions of power. The goal is to determine whether women in the female circuit of power define power differently than the men in the male circuit of power.

Women in the Female Circuit of Power-- Define Power

After establishing a list of women who are considered powerful in New View, I asked each one to define power. The answers are in many forms, but most state that it is the ability to get things done. Elaborations on that statement were made when I asked participants to talk about how things get done. Those elaborations include: "...getting things done through consensus building." "...through someone who empowers others." "The ability to find the people who can help get it done." "I always think about who will work with me to get something done." "I stay in the background to get things done...to start things... motivate." "In order to get things done, I believe you have to be a servant."

All respondents in the female circuit of power view power as an active term. In addition, they see the action being collaborative and inclusive in nature. None of them perceive themselves as powerful in their own right. Most express surprise that their names appear on the "circuits of power" list. They can imagine that people appreciate their work or the time they spend in community service, but they do not view themselves as powerful. Comments that express these themes follow: "I don't see myself as a power person, I see myself as a popular person." I don't think about power that much. I don't think about power over someone else or influencing anyone in my day to day life." "I think more of the responsibility of my position rather than the power of it."

Many of the women talk about negative power, something they do not want to experience. They call it "control over," "power over," "force or violence," "when a person uses their position for their own benefit instead of for others." "Some people do it all themselves, keeping more of the action to themselves..." "Some people want you to do everything through them."

Leading women in the educational system sound very similar to the women in the community female circuit of power. They, too, define power as the ability to get things done with the help of other people. Definitions include the following phrases: "Power doesn't reside within a person, but needs others." "You don't get it, someone gives it to you." "It's teamwork." "...it's letting people know that they are important. What we are talking about here is interaction." "...empowerment..."

When talking about how they get things done the following statements are made: "I never ask someone to do something that I wouldn't do myself." "I like to include people in the decision process even when the decision doesn't go my way." "I use consensus building." "I build respect with whomever I am working with, by letting them know that they are important...there should be communication, sharing--the difference is caring--we must value their experiences. How others feel is important. The knowledge that they already have is good and we need it." "If you are secure you don't rule with an iron hand."

Another facet of the same question involved having participants in the female circuit of power describe characteristics that they possess which cause others to think of them as powerful. In other words, to tell me the reason they have been listed as powerful. Responses follow: "I think you have to be a good listener so you can hear what people need and want. Then, you try to do it." "You are powerful because you get things done...You've paid your dues." "I was raised that you give back to people, you just don't take. I was raised to be a giver not a taker." "I get things done. I love to be patient." "I am independent, self-motivated. You have to get the job done. You must follow-up and make certain that it happens. .must be task-oriented--everyday keeping track of yourself."

The women in power positions in the educational system share their characteristics which they believe allow them their jobs: "I am creative and innovative." "...a hard worker, involved, tenacious. I am willing to make sacrifices to meet the demands." "I am collaborative. I seek multiple inputs." "I hope I provide enough knowledge or help the people find enough knowledge to make a good decision and set well-reasoned goals." "I am quietly persistent. All of my colleagues were the good old boy type of males. That was the way to get an entry--was to attend the meetings and sit and listen. Then, I would quietly persist in getting my point across--then persist on through the meetings. For example, I would say, 'We talked about doing so and so and if we would...' and I would repeat what I wanted to say persistently to pursue what I thought was important. It is a case of choosing your wars carefully and staying out of battles."

Men in the Male Circuit of Power--Define Power

After establishing a list of men who are considered powerful in New View, I asked each one to define power. The definitions they offered most often include the concept of influence. When asking respondents how they influence others they reply: "...you influence by gaining authority, getting into a position of responsibility." "...if someone is so good that everyone is afraid he will go somewhere else. It's okay to be an SOB if you are right 100% of the time, but you better be right." "There are people who grab the reins of a project and push it and keep pushing it till it's done. They are more or less consensus people until they reach a certain point. They finally reach a level of frustration where they say, 'Hey, I'm tired of sitting around here talking about this thing. Let's get it done.' Then he is sort of like a bull and others follow." "My power and influence come from my position." "...the application of knowledge through political connections...you influence because you work hard and know more than other people. Knowledge is power. That's all it is. The person who works hard is going to override people who sit on their

butts...it must be a broad knowledge base--a cross-section of everything." "You persuade by explaining your position, by talking others into going along so they want to take part and believe in what they are doing. Hopefully, you don't have to tell them they have to do it because they only do it halfheartedly." "...power has to be there...in terms of how we're going to do something. There must be a sharing of information. Information is power, too. If I have information and you don't, I have more power in that particular area." "[You can influence if] you are in a position to make decisions that affect others."

For the men in the male circuit of power, being informed is the most common method of influence. Information and knowledge elevate people to privileged positions--positions in which they are able to convince others of their own leadership. There is much less discussion from the men about getting things done. It is implied that something will happen if you can establish the fact that you are the leader--that others will follow your directions. Only one of the men talks about collaboration, but interestingly, he does not see collaboration as powerful. Another man asserts that "effective influence is never singular...there is no one who by themselves could make something happen or keep something from happening." And yet, the same individual states that the sign ordinance battle would never have occurred if he [alone] had been consulted.

A few of the men talk about the negative aspects of power. One man states that in order for power to work it has to be focused. He feels that fragmented power is harmful. I am not certain what this implies--whether he is insisting on a power elite because of his discomfort with pluralism, or whether he just feels things do not happen unless people are going in the same direction. He talks often about "common dreams." Another man asserts that if you cannot persuade people to do what you want then you use chain-of-command and make them do it. He believes that use of chain-of-command happens only when absolutely necessary.

A third man confides that if someone is an "SOB" then that person has to be right all of the time. It is obvious that he feels negative about such a person. However, it is clear that he thinks someone should take the lead in any project. Still another man refers to the negative effect power has when it "goes to someone's head." He asserts that when power goes to someone's head, it is less likely that s/he will listen to others and as a result s/he will make decisions alone. Decisions made in a person's own self-interest are also seen as the result of negative power. The implication being that it is possible for the person in power to make decisions for the good of all.

Powerful men in the educational system define power as the ability to make decisions, and the authority to make certain that they are implemented. As with the powerful men in the community, they generally view decision-making as a lonely activity. Definitions include the following comments: "It's the ability to establish something you want to accomplish--then you work with people to help you get there. It could be me dictating what I want to have done, but that would not be successful power. People must want to do what *you* [my emphasis] want accomplished." "There are two segments of power. One is authority or organizational permission to make certain decisions. The other is influence or personal power. I believe that personal power is more powerful. Relying on positional power alone gets perfunctory compliance. Personal

power convinces people that they should follow." "...[power] connotes that someone has the ability to make decisions." "There are two types of power. One is position power which is inherent, and the other is personal power which is earned." "...one who has the ultimate responsibility to make final decisions and to make certain the final decisions are carried out." "[Power] is to do with an individual's ability to structure events and activities to accomplish their desired outcome." "...the ability to accomplish and do things that need to be done."

When discussing how they get things done the powerful men in the educational system make the following statements: "First, I share my idea with the staff and let them know what the problem is. I must be accepted and trusted. They look to me as someone they can trust. They have reason to believe that I know how to get it done so they trust my decision." "I provide them with what the goal is and why. I let them be part of the final goal and make sure that they have the tools to be successful." "In the initial stages I get input from people who will be impacted by the decision. I check policies and guidelines. I check to see who will most benefit and who will least benefit. I think all decisions are made eventually in isolation..." "I must work with others to get things done... things are not completely in my control. But I push in that direction. I don't accept 'no.'" "You can compel a result by the ability to persuade others, barter, negotiate or manipulate others. They could be convinced that the decision being made is in their own best interest...or by being the person to whom one has to come for financial backing or support--or a party who could persuade others--being in a privileged position."

As with the respondents in the female circuit of power, I ask the participants in the male circuit of power to share their own characteristics which they believe make them powerful. Their responses follow: "On the council, I am a consensus builder until it gets to the point of being intolerable--then I move on it." "I feel like I could talk with anyone about anything." "I try not to dominate. I bring people together and do the right thing...I run with something until I get what I want. I go back and I go back until it happens." "I am the one who brings an idea to the group and then attempt to get consensus. I wait for a while, then, when results are not forthcoming, I take off running." "I'm an initiator--a starter--not interested in finishing."

While talking with the men in power positions in the educational system I ask them to share their characteristics which make them powerful: "I am a good facilitator. I could manipulate...but I choose to facilitate change." "Salesmanship can be important." "I like to be in a situation where I can control what is going on. I was already successful. I have communication skills."

Dr. Mary Osburn and Power

In order to determine conditions which support the selection of a woman for the position of superintendent of schools in a given community the data examined above were gathered. These data provide the contextual characteristics surrounding the selection of Dr. Mary Osburn as superintendent of New View. The final piece of the research involves the careful, detailed inquiry of Dr. Osburn's view of power and it's use. In addition, interviews of Dr. Osburn's co-workers, subordinates, former supervisors, board

of education members, community members and friends are used to verify that Dr. Osburn's practice of using power is congruent with her perception of her own practice.

Dr. Osburn Defines Power

When asked to define power Dr. Osburn replies with a definition of action, "Power is the ability to achieve desired outcomes. It is executed in a number of ways. I would say it is situational, not autocratic or conciliatory." When asked to elaborate on ways she achieves desired outcomes she continues, "I have the ability to organize people in a manner that achieves desired goals--that manner being the ability to lead people to consensus...I bring together the people who will be affected by the decision and say, 'Here is the perceived problem--is this really the problem?' You may find that it is not the real problem, so you come to consensus about what the real problem is. Then you discuss many solutions to come up with a solution which benefits the most people--especially who is affected by it. It needs to be for the greatest good."

Obviously, as is true for other women of power, Dr. Osburn has a collaborative, "power to" definition of power. Clearly, she takes her definition into practice. Her practical application goes to the extreme of consensus-building even at the level of determining the nature and articulation of the problem. In addition, Dr. Osburn is similar to other women in the study when she adds, "It is difficult for me to say that I have power." This perception of self may be necessary for a person to be truly collaborative. One who views self as powerful more naturally believes other input as less important than one's own. True collaboration occurs when all participants are viewed as equally as possible.

Dr. Osburn shares her views of collaboration: "I've always believed that we win when we quit worrying about who gets the credit. I want the project complete. If it happens by a coalition then great. I am not interested in seeing Mary Osburn did such and such. I think as women we have always known that we have to work with people to accomplish anything. Just as a mother running a household doesn't always get the credit for what the children accomplish, but it has been the preparing and planning which helps it happen. I always think of myself as the vehicle in the snowstorm who goes out and moves the snow so that other people can operate. I think that it is important that we do that." She continues, "I don't want to be seen in the position of supervisor ... You must give people the tools to do the job, but you can get out of the picture if you train people and give them the tools."

Dr. Osburn's commitment to collaboration is vividly revealed when she shares, "One of the harder things to do is to support a decision that you wouldn't have made yourself but have given someone else the opportunity to make it so you need to support it...I think that the decision I make is the decision to make a decision collaboratively. Then I give up the right to the final decision. I must support whatever is decided."

There are those in the study who believe that collaboration or "power to" is a sign of weakness, an inability to lead. When asked if she is concerned about this perception. She replies, "No one has said that directly to me, but I have had that feeling because of some comments made. Well, one of the first

jobs I had, one gentleman said to me, 'As quiet as you are, why do you think you will be successful at this job?' Comments like that. Some have said, 'If I had this situation, I would have done such and such.' They were kind of like correcting me for being as collaborative as I have been. They said, 'You should have just told them, and then you would have moved forward on it.' And I take that as being somewhat critical of me. Yet my own belief in terms of leadership is that it is collaborative. Even our instruments that supposedly measure leadership do not measure collaboration."

Dr. Osburn refers to knowledge when she reflects on the nature of power, and as the men in the study, she acknowledges its importance. Unlike the men in the study, however, she speaks of the need to share it with others in order that they make the best decisions. "You should never withhold information. People need all of the tools with which to come to a decision."

Others View Dr. Osburn's Use of Power

It is apparent when talking with people around Dr. Osburn that she is accurate in her reporting of her own use of power. Each person interviewed, from the community-at-large or from the education community, male or female, refers to her as a collaborator/consensus-builder. Responses include: "Dr. Osburn wields power through other people. She is a very capable leader." "She is less than direct--more of a background substance that she possesses that is not confrontational, not frontal. She uses her people be they volunteers or professionals, very effectively in that sense. Mary is a real good leader. She resisted the temptation to take the front position and recognized that the win had to be in a plurality...She listens, collaborates, gets the best out of the people who are available to her." "I have rarely seen someone work as effectively as she does in two areas: 1) building consensus and laying the foundation in moving things in the direction that she wants them to move, but one step at a time, and 2) in her delegation of authority to cause the people who work for her to be highly motivated..." "She is quietly persistent....I've seen this quiet persistence on committees, etc. I don't know how she describes herself. She is a collaborator." "Mary is a quietly powerful person. She does not wield the power."

The comments continue: "She is collaborative. She gets information from both sides...she tries to get as much input as possible." "She is powerful in that she uses a team approach. She operates with one vote most of the time. Even when hiring central office staff. She shares authority and empowers others." "She gets a lot of input for decisions, and that input remains there. She goes out to the public and staff and works hand in hand with them and lets them help with the management." "Mary is comfortable with dictating if she has to, but I don't think she prefers to do that. She has challenged herself on our decisions by asking 'Should we be making this decision?'" "She seeks input. She gathers information. She is collaborative." "...more process oriented." "I don't see her using power, per se. She represents it in her position. She's not aggressive. She is very organized with lots of qualifications. She defines power differently than men." "She always asks if this is a decision we should be making, meaning that we should get more input." "I call her a super woman. She does things so quietly. She is so capable, always has time for people--she's a listener, collaborator, doer. She has vision and can see the potential that people have, unknown to

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themselves." "Whenever you attend any meeting, she is always prepared. She doesn't fit in group one or two, because she doesn't start with a consensus then run with the ball. She follows the process all the way through. She is leader all the way through and presents both sides of the story. She is a collaborator, a new category of leader." "The amount of involvement she allows is great." "She's a good listener." "She works behind the scenes."

The validation that Dr. Mary Osburn defines power philosophically and in practice as "power to" is convincing. In addition, these responses are all positive in feeling tone. Dr. Osburn is strongly supported by the community and the public education system of New View largely because of her definition and use of power.

Dr. Osburn Compares Men and Women

Dr. Osburn finds it difficult to compare men and women since, in her opinion, she uses all types of leadership styles herself. She confides that, "I think that we have been raised differently [men and women], but I have had very few women to work with so my experience with how women really lead is limited. The women in the first chair are very rare. I sit as the Council of Superintendents chairperson. I am the first female member of the council and the first female chair. The same thing was true in the secondary school principals' organization. I was the first female officer. So, I haven't worked with many women." She does share the following anecdote. "One of my college professors..said that the worst habit that women have is that we continue to be caretakers and we don't step forward and just lead, but that we are too much caretakers. I thought that was interesting." Thus, Dr. Osburn has been faced with the difference between men and women. In fact, when talking about other leaders [men] she states, "So many times people will talk in collaborative language, but if you look at their past history, they don't act collaboratively."

A Comparison of Dr. Mary Osburn to Men of Power

In order to facilitate a comparison between Dr. Osburn and men of power, I asked respondents to share their views of Mr. Hamilton, the superintendent who preceded her, and his use of power. Respondents, as reported in an earlier section, assert that Mr. Hamilton is a powerful man in the community and the education system. He is respected and well-liked by the majority of those interviewed. When considering his use of power, these comments are made: "I think that he [Mr. Hamilton] is basically the opposite of Mary. He made his own decisions. He was well-liked--has a tremendous personality. He did things that Mary doesn't do. He was dominating. Mary is empowering." "Mr. Hamilton was a one man show. He could manipulate the board to think he was always right. They did more what he wanted. He told them how he would run the schools. There was no doubt that he set policy...He was a chain-of-command person. He was in control. If building a school, he decided where the school would be built even if others didn't want it. Mary will tell the two sides, maybe even three sides to help people make the decisions." "He was just a good old boy. He ran things himself. He had been around a long time." "He was ingrained in the male power structure of the community very heavily. He used dominance." "Mr. Hamilton was set in his ways. He reminded you that he was powerful...If he got threatened he got

hyped...He walked away from people when they wanted something in order to subordinate them. If he was wrong, he had to figure it out--you couldn't tell him."

I checked with Mr. Hamilton for his perception of his own use of power. When I asked if he views himself as a collaborator, he answered, "No, not as much. My time and my age make me a different type of leader. People look to me to make decisions." Clearly, Mr. Hamilton used power in a dominant fashion.

When respondents compare Dr. Osburn to men in general they state: "The men I have worked with are much more of the good old boy network--joking, back slapping. There is an attractiveness about that especially when most of those in power are men to begin with. Men are comfortable with that back slapping style." "Men have more of a tendency to say 'do this, do this, and do this' because that is the way men have always been. They are very directive. Women can't be directive or before long they are called bitches. So if women want to stay in power they have to find a way to circumvent by using a softer style. As an example, I would use Mary. She's a good listener." Most respondents refer to Dr. Osburn's use of power as the most collaborative style they have experienced. And further, most respondents have no experience with a woman in the "first chair" before their experience with Dr. Osburn.

Has Dr. Osburn's Definition and Use of Power Changed?

Dr. Osburn does not believe that her use of power has changed over the years of her career. She reports that she was collaborative when teaching. "When I was a classroom teacher, I had students help establish how the classroom ran. When accomplishing a task I was a collaborator. You can accomplish change if you involve people in that change process."

People who know or work with Dr. Osburn agree with her assertions. "She hasn't changed. She has changed her focus because she has to consider the whole district." "No, she hasn't changed. When she made decisions as high school principal she got input and background before making decisions. She has an open door even as a superintendent. She hasn't changed."

Reactions to the Study

This final section is my reaction to the study, my comments and thoughts about what is presented in the study. I recognize that my perception of reality is not necessarily connected to the thoughts, experiences, and perceptions of participants in the study. I expect that the reader will draw conclusions from the reporting of my perceptions.

Reaction Number One: ***Power is defined differently by women than men.***

This impression is the most fundamental of my reactions. The basic definition of power strongly tends to differ dependent upon the gender of an individual. Women in circuits of power, in a given setting, define the concept of power differently than men in circuits of power of that same setting. In addition, women in positions of leadership in a given educational setting

define power differently than men in positions of leadership in the same educational setting.

Women in circuits of power and women in positions of educational leadership in a given setting define power as the ability to get things done through collaboration and consensus building, while men in circuits of power and men in positions of educational leadership in a given setting define power as the ability to influence or lead others by having information and knowledge beyond those around them. Women define power as "power to," that is, as the ability to empower others to make their own decisions collaboratively and to carry them out through a collective, inclusive model. Men, on the other hand, view power as "power over," or the ability of one to convince others to do as he wishes through any means possible.

When men discuss the different means through which others become compliant and willing to do as they ask, they include the concepts of positional and personal power, the need for superiority through information and knowledge, and the need for dominance through economic means. In contrast, women view the means to accomplish goals as embedded in viewing others as equals or even as more important, in accommodating as many needs as possible in the setting, and being willing to work harder than anyone else.

The two different definitions of the concept of power fall consistently depending upon gender across virtually all interviewees, and, thus, produce a "male definition" of power as "power over" and a "female definition" of power as "power to."

Reaction Number Two: ***When women operate according to the female concept of power their chances to acquire positions of power increase dramatically.***

Since using the reputational method resulted in lists of people viewed as successfully powerful, my impression is that the female definition of power as "power to" is the one which allows women success and access to positions of power while the male definition of power as "power over" is the one which insures men success and access to positions of power.

It is my impression that women who define power as men define it are not successful in their positions, or are even fired from them. It appears that our culture insists that women continue to define power as "power to" if they wish to remain in positions of power. Men, on the other hand, are viewed as less powerful or not powerful if they are fully collaborative or define power as "power to."

Dr. Mary Osburn, the central woman of the study, certainly reinforces this impression. Her definition of power throughout her career has been "power to." In addition, in practice, she is fully collaborative even as a superintendent of schools. She shares that she has been viewed as weak by some because of her definition of power, but defends the definition because it works for her and for other women whom she knows. She, in fact, tells stories of women who define power as "power over," who act like a man, who are not seen as successful, are hated, or are fired. Her definition of power as "power

to" is important for her success. Other women in the study affirm this belief as they share their stories.

Reaction Number Three: *Women are most likely to be empowered in those communities having pluralistic or diffused power structures.*

The specific community which selected a woman as superintendent of schools has distinctive characteristics. Of those characteristics, it is my impression that the most important is that the community must be in transition; that is, it must be growing rapidly, creating a large population outside the power network which makes the community more pluralistic, open to change and behavior outside the norm. The portion of the community which is rapidly growing quite naturally consists of people who are new to the community and who, therefore, have less interest in the status quo because the status quo excludes them. Change becomes a natural occurrence as populations grow.

Second, it appears that if the community is relatively small and close to a larger metropolitan area, the chances are great that the small community will become a "bedroom community" for the larger city. This overriding residential function of the smaller community creates a different focus for the majority of the homeowners of the community. They are interested in a beautiful place to live rather than a place to make a living, a focus contrary to the business/economic interests of the power network of the community. This differing philosophy between the two groups, the larger group of residents and the smaller group of business owners, creates a battleground for democracy. Democratic principles in practice allow unusual political occurrences such as the successful write-in campaign for the mayorship and the selection of a woman as superintendent.

Third, I am in agreement with the research which reports that educated middle to upper middle class populations are more progressive in their thinking and will more easily accept a deviation from the norm (McClosky and Brill, 1983). The specific community in the study is one of educated middle to upper middle class people who exhibit sophistication and tolerance in their attitudes toward inclusion and deviation from the norm. Certainly, this is an important characteristic when considering women in the superintendency because selection of a woman as superintendent of schools is an action outside the norm.

Reaction Number Four: *Women who attain positions of power are most successful when they adopt female approaches to power which stress collaboration, inclusion, and consensus-building--models based on the belief that one person is not more powerful than another.*

Women in power do not view themselves as powerful. They are surprised to be referred to as powerful and often shocked when they find themselves in positions which they view as powerful. Again, Dr. Osburn fits the mold when she says, "It is difficult for me to say I have power. I would rather say I have the ability to organize people in a manner that achieves their desired goals."

Women who are successful in powerful positions define power as "power to" get things done with others, something more easily done for women than for men because women do not view themselves as powerful. They work using a collaborative, inclusive, consensus-building model with their own voice being used in concert with the others rather than in authority over or dominance over others. Dr. Osburn, as established earlier, is a master collaborator using her employees as team members in a team model which gives everyone the opportunity to build consensus or if consensus cannot be gained, everyone, including herself, is given one vote.

Notes:

1. Chinese philosophy asserts that "negative" and "positive" are opposite sides of the same coin.
2. This dualistic conception is not original with these contemporary writers. See Wartenberg (1990, p. 23) for a discussion of Spinoza and his use of Latin terms to distinguish between "power over" and "power to."
3. See Brennan (1987, p. 25) for a discussion of the holographic view of the universe--a jumping-off place for the beginning of understanding that every piece of reality is connected in such a way that there is no such thing as a part.
4. Interestingly, Russell refers towomen only when discussing "power behind the scenes." Every other type of power is put in the arena of "men only." It is also noteworthy that this only power available to women, "power behing the scenes" is referred to as "undesirable" power. Women are seen as being powerful only when empowered by powerful men whom they have manipulated or coerced to empower themselves. They [women] are, in a sense, stealing power and, therefore, are not seen legitimately powerful.
5. Taking into account all reciprocal influences is the beginning of a qulaitative methodology. Simon appears to be abandoning his quantitative methods. After all, there is no such ting as an "independent variable" in the human social sciences [...at least, I hope not.]
6. Arendt's distain for the "power over" is suggested by her having noticed that the greatest enemy of authority is contempt and the surest tool to undermine authority is laughter.
7. Although triangulation is a term used in interpretive inquiry, its use in critical inquiry does not imply that the two types of inquiry are synonymous. A central challenge posed to the interpretive paradigm by the critical paradigm is the argument that relity is more than negotiated accounts--that we are both shaped by and shapers of our world. Because as critical researchers we shape our world, we must work to maximize ourselves as "mediator[s] between people's self-understandings and the need for ideology critique and transformative social action *without becoming impositional*" (Lather, 1991, p. 64, original emphasis).
8. Lather (1991) reminds us that the "concept of advocacy research remains as oxymoron to the many who take scholarly objectivity as both a possible and desirable goal in the human sciences, the mantle of objectivity which largely shielded the sciences from such questions has been irreparably rent. Contemporary history and philosophy of science, sociology of knowledge, and movement in science itself, all have combined to impress upon us the interdependence of method, theory and values " (p. 14).

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